

AN: Time for the start of this new series! Leading on from where *The Haiba Mystery II* left off, we rejoin Detective TPYMK and Sarafina for thirteen more stories of action, drama and illegal drugs. Enjoy!

Poison

Detective

"Goddamn it..."

Timon rubbed the back of his head, gritting his teeth, resisting the urge to jump up and down while screaming in anger. The meerkat could already feel a nasty bump where he had been struck. Whoever had hit him knew exactly where to make their mark.

Confused and disorientated – thanks to all of the drugs he had taken the previous night – he looked around. Timon didn't know whether he'd been unconscious for minutes or hours. It must have been a long time: the sun had almost set.

The meerkat scowled. The addicts who he sold Sumu to would now be left waiting in the clearing, wondering where their usual party hosts were. There would be no orgies of drink and drugs tonight. Timon had more important matters to attend to.

"Pumbaa?" Timon climbed to his feet, looking around by the riverbank. "Pumbaa!"

Pumbaa was Timon's associate in dealing illegal drugs and getting animals addicted to them. They had enjoyed a long and prosperous partnership together for many months now, and they had certainly made a fair share of money out of it.

"Pumbaa! Where the hell are—"

Timon stopped as he noticed something lying beside the trees.

It was Pumbaa.

The warthog was lying on his back in a pool of blood. He had been shot through the head with pinpoint accuracy. The animal had died instantly.

"Jesus..."

Timon stumbled over to the warthog's dying body, stunned. His memory wasn't exactly the best – the drugs had that effect on the brain – but he just about remembered hearing a gunshot, followed by a blow to the back of the head. That was it.

"Who the hell...?"

The question died on Timon's tongue. It was pointless. He would never be able to figure out who had murdered Pumbaa by speculation alone. This was obviously the work of some professional. Possibly a rival drug gang, he mused. It was certainly possible...

"I've gotta get out of here," Timon said, suddenly feeling quite conscious about himself. The area seemed very unsafe. Danger could be lurking in every corner. Most of this was

paranoia caused by excessive marijuana smoking, but it couldn't be denied that the jungle had a very sinister atmosphere to it that evening...

Timon sauntered away, leaving the warthog's body to rot and fester. *God, I need a joint*, he thought to himself. *A big one, too.*

The meerkat was staring down at the ground as he walked along, so he didn't notice that he was about to bump right into a black-furred lion.

"Timon."

"Hey!"

Timon jumped back in surprise, eyes bulging in horror. He was staring up at someone who he didn't even expect to see that night. He seldom saw him at all, in fact.

His red eyes burned into the meerkat's soul – or, at least, what remained of it. Dealing drugs was far from the most moral of actions, after all.

"Oh... uh... hello, sir," Timon said, trying to sound cool and calm. "What are you doing here on this fine evening?"

"Your partner is dead." Death spoke with an element of displeasure in his voice. His gaze never shifted away from the meerkat. He maintained total eye contact. "He was shot right through the head."

"I... I know," Timon mumbled, trying to form proper words in Death's frightening presence.

The meerkat didn't know much about his mysterious employer. He often stuck to the shadows, working in secret. However, that wasn't to say that he wasn't successful. Far from it. He ran an empire. A massive network of producers and dealers, all in the business of supplying the Sumu drug to addicted users. There was a lot of money to be made, that was for certain.

"And do you know who did it?" Death asked. His eyes seemed to glow brighter as he finished the question.

"N-no," Timon murmured. "He – or she – knocked me out. I was hit on the back of the head. I don't remember anything."

"You don't remember anything." It wasn't a question. "This... is unacceptable."

"Oh, God..." Timon looked aside, knowing that Death was probably going to kill him now. He'd seen him slaughter enough users in his time. Dealers probably weren't that different to him. He didn't discriminate.

"I want answers, Timon," Death told the meerkat firmly. "You had better find out who killed your partner. There are complications already. You know this. It's going to be tough to make more profit with only one dealer."

"You... you still want me to sell?" Timon said, sounding utterly surprised. He thought that he would be lying at the bottom of the river by now...

"Of course," Death said, nodding. "The users need their product. You are now the only supplier left in this area. I still expect the same amount of income."

Timon nodded in agreement. "Yeah," he said. "Sure."

"Good." Death walked away, only to turn around moments later. "Oh, and Timon?"

"Yes?"

"Find out who the killer was," Death said, glancing in the direction of Pumbaa's body. "There cannot be any more mistakes. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir. Anything."

Death disappeared into the trees without another word.

Stunned that he wasn't dead yet, Timon took one last look at Pumbaa's corpse. Something gripped him at that exact moment. An emotion. One filled with a mixture of both anger and sadness.

And it was called revenge.

Sarafina tapped her claw on the kitchen table as she stared straight ahead, lost in her own thoughts.

She had almost been raped.

The mere thought of such a thing occurring was enough to make anyone shiver in disgust. But she had experienced it at close quarters. With a meerkat, no less. That alone was a cause for embarrassment...

"You all right?"

Sarafina's eyes shifted upwards to look at the man standing opposite her. Detective TPYMK.

She didn't know much about this mysterious man, aside from the fact that he was a royal pain in the butt. It seemed that he was out to ruin her life as much as possible, when all she wanted was just to have a good time. Why did he have to be so hard on her?

Sarafina first met the detective after one of her usual parties with her fellow addicts. From that moment, her life had been changed for ever. Now she was in the midst of an investigation to try and figure out who was responsible for the illegal Sumu trade.

This wasn't something that the lioness particularly wanted to get involved in, considering that she was a good customer of Sumu dealers. She had been addicted to the drug for quite some time now. It was a habit that would be hard to break.

"Yeah," Sarafina said. "I'm all right."

I'd be better with a bag of Sumu, she thought, feeling exhausted. A snort of her favourite substance would be more than enough to perk her up. I need to get good and high...

She made a mental note to ditch the detective at the first possible opportunity and find some Sumu. She couldn't exactly go back to her dealers. They wanted her head on a plate. Still, maybe her friend Moto had some to spare...

"You sure?" TPYMK didn't look too convinced. "You look rough."

"Yeah, what's new?" the lioness retorted. The foul odour she emanated and the puncture marks littered all over her forelegs pretty much made her a poster child for rough-looking animals. She had taken many drugs in her life – becoming highly addicted in the process – and it had taken a toll on her appearance. She had completely changed from the strong, beautiful young lioness she once was...

"All right – you look rougher than usual," TPYMK said, rolling his eyes. "You were almost raped, Sarafina. Don't you want to, you know, *talk* about it?"

"I ain't got nothing to talk about," Sarafina said. "The guy tried to screw me. You knocked him out. That's all there is to it."

"Let's just hope he's not dead," TPYMK said. He was the one who rescued Sarafina from the dealers. He killed the warthog, yet knocked out the meerkat. "I was banking on one of them surviving..."

"What for?" Sarafina asked.

"To question him," TPYMK replied. "I want to know as much about whoever is behind this drug empire as possible."

"Yeah, well, you'd better make your interrogation quick," Sarafina said, a look of vengeance in her eyes. "'Cause the next time I see him, I will bite off his junk with my bare teeth."

TPYMK pulled a face, disgusted. "You win in the vividness department," he said, "but I don't think it's going to be very effective when it comes to our investigation."

"*Our* investigation?" Sarafina said. She jerked a claw in her direction. "This has got nothing to do with me. You roped me into this mess. I'm just waiting for you to get shot or stabbed so I can get *out* of it."

"That's not going to happen," TPYMK assured her. "I will bring this empire crashing down if it's the last thing I do."

"It probably *will* be the last thing you do," Sarafina shot back. "Whoever's in charge of Timon and Pumbaa is gonna be out for your blood."

"We're in the same boat here," TPYMK said, staring into her eyes. "Whoever's after me is going to be after you. You're involved in this, whether you like it or not."

"This is all your fault," Sarafina complained. "If I never met you, none of this would have happened. You and your damn investigation."

"Do you want me to *apologise* for not saving you?" TPYMK asked, placing a hand against his chest. "Is that it? You were almost raped!"

"Hey, I've been to a few Mixers in my time, so I think—"

"Wait, what?" TPYMK interrupted. "*Mixers*?"

"I told you before: the parties get wild," Sarafina said. "It's not uncommon for a few different species to, you know... snuggle up, if you catch my drift. We call 'em Mixers."

"Just when I thought your druggie culture couldn't get any filthier," TPYMK muttered, sitting down at the table. "I don't suppose you mixed much when there were any meerkats present, then, huh?"

"I tend to be more interested in bigger guys," Sarafina said with a sly smile. "Monkeys are good in that department."

"You really can sink no lower," TPYMK said. He waved a hand in the air. "Anyway, we need to get down to business."

"What business?" Sarafina asked.

"The business of taking down the Sumu trade," said TPYMK.

"For a second there, I thought you were considering dealing it yourself," Sarafina told him. "We *could*, you know. Find the ingredients, buy an RV and start cooking it out in the desert. That's old school, man."

"You've been watching too much TV," TPYMK said, raising his eyebrows. "Look, let's just compile together what we know so far. There's a lab, out in the desert. Is that correct?"

"Yeah," Sarafina said. "That's what Tiny Timon said. Bet they've got a hundred cooks there making the stuff. And I bet there are probably ten times as many dealers, too. This stuff spreads."

"Well, we can't be everywhere at once," TPYMK said, stating the obvious. "Let's just stick to this area first, shall we? Now, I think that if we shut down the lab, the entire operation will crumble. No Sumu means no customers."

"Yay," Sarafina said flatly. "The only fun thing in my life is gone. My hero."

"It's the only way you'll ever get off that drug," TPYMK said, "and I know that deep down you *want* to get off it."

"A little bit," Sarafina admitted. "Yeah. Sure. But it's not exactly taking precedence right now. I'm just running around doing your dirty work. I could've smoked, like, ten joints this evening. Or I could be tripping..." She buried her head in her forepaws. "Oh, *God*, I wish I was tripping..."

The lioness started nibbling on her claws. She did that a lot whenever she was craving for some Sumu. The addiction was strong. No one could resist it. Sooner or later, Sarafina would be on the drug again... She couldn't hide from it for ever.

"Well, you won't be," TPYMK said. "Not while I'm around."

"Then what do you want me to do, huh?" Sarafina demanded, sounding rather impatient. "Go to the lab and just beat everyone up?"

"No," TPYMK said. "I want an update."

Sarafina narrowed her eyes. "What?" she exclaimed. "An *update*?"

"Yeah." The detective nodded. "There should be another mad party where all your 'homies' are tonight, yes?"

"Yeah," agreed Sarafina. "There are parties every night."

"Then I want to know what's happening with the dealers," TPYMK explained. "If at least one of them is dead, then that area is going to lose some customers."

"So you want me to ask my friends if they're still gonna buy Sumu?" presumed Sarafina.

"Something like that," TPYMK said. "I want to know what the reaction is to Pumbaa's death. It's gotta put some fear into them, right? They know that the police must be on to them by now."

"They're not just gonna be thinking of the police," Sarafina said. "There are worse things."

"Like what?" asked TPYMK.

"Rival gangs," Sarafina said. "*That's* what. Guys who wanna start up their own Sumu businesses."

"That's something we'll have to tackle later," TPYMK said. "Right now, let's just focus on *this* business."

"So while I'm out there getting information, what are *you* gonna be doing?" Sarafina asked. "Just sitting here on your butt and stroking your—"

"I'm gonna go check out that lab," TPYMK cut in, standing up.

Sarafina stared at him. "*You're* going to check out that lab? By yourself?"

TPYMK nodded. "Uh-huh."

Sarafina laughed. "Good luck."

"Fine. Laugh, if you want," said TPYMK, leaving the kitchen. "Now, are you coming or not?"

Sarafina rolled her eyes as she followed him. "Whatever."

"Okay, now this is very simple," TPYMK told Sarafina, as they walked along a dirt path that snaked through the jungle. "You go and get some information from the users while I check out the lab. We meet back here at midnight to discuss things. Got it?"

"Sure," Sarafina mumbled, not really listening. She was more interested in dreaming about all the weed and Sumu she would get to use at the party...

"Sarafina." TPYMK stopped, staring down at her. "I need you to listen to me."

"Yeah, I am," Sarafina said. "Get some information. I heard ya."

"And *don't* get high," TPYMK warned. "I'll know if you do. I can smell it."

Sarafina shrugged. "No problem. See ya round."

The lioness disappeared into the maze of trees and bushes. TPYMK sucked in a lungful of fresh jungle air, and strode down the path. *This is going to be a long night*, he thought.

"Heh-heh-heh..." Timon chuckled to himself as he surveyed TPYMK walking off down the path. "I've got ya now."

He had heard the entire conversation between the detective and the lioness. Everything.

"The boss is gonna be very pleased about this," Timon said to himself. "Very pleased indeed."

Timon laughed as he disappeared into the midst of the jungle. *Time for a celebratory joint, I think...*

To Be Continued...

AN: Oh, dear... Timon's found out that Detective TPYMK and Sarafina are working together! What consequences will this have on the plot? Well, quite dire ones, I should imagine. See you for the next story!

NEXT TIME: Sarafina gambles with Moto...